



January 26, 2012

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Secretary of Transportation
State of Maryland

Ralign T. Wells, Administrator
Maryland Transit Administration

We submit this letter on behalf of the residents of the Town of Garrett Park, with the express approval of the mayor and Town Council. As you know, Garrett Park is a 114-year old independent municipality that was founded as a railroad suburb on the main line of the B&O; we have patronized our commuter rail service since the 1880's. Although we cherish our historic railroad associations, we are writing on a far more immediate and practical concern. MARC's proposed changes for the Brunswick line (to and from West Virginia/Frederick and Washington DC) include the elimination of one stop in Garrett Park in the morning and two stops in Garrett Park returning from DC in the evening. MARC's stated reason is to improve on-time performance, which has been declining on the Brunswick line. The Town of Garrett Park urges your support in maintaining current levels of service to Garrett Park.

We understand that MARC has announced that they will not implement the schedule changes previously proposed but will issue a revised proposal in March and hold hearings in April. We applaud MARC's recognition that its initial proposal did not meet the needs of its riders. There is no question that the elimination of the two evening stops would be damaging to revenue and is disproportionately unfair. In MARC's initial proposal, only Garrett Park along the entire route suffers the elimination of two stops in one direction or three in both directions. Further, the planned reductions are made worse by the timing of the remaining service. As initially proposed, the final two trains stopping in Garrett Park depart Union Station at 5:40 pm and 7:15 pm. The 95-minute gap between these two trains presents Garrett Park commuters with an untenable choice; for many MARC riders, work schedules make it impossible to get to the train that departs Union Station at 5:40 pm. That makes it both unfair and unworkable for those who cannot make the 5:40; to have to wait until 7:15pm – the last train of the day – means that they won't see their families until nearly 8:00 pm. The likely result would be that most of MARC's current Garrett Park commuters would find it impracticable to use MARC.

MARC did not justify its proposed elimination of service. It's ironic that the reason on-time performance has worsened is because of MARC's success. Ridership is growing. It takes longer to pick up and discharge more passengers. This is a cause for celebration, but if MARC wants to

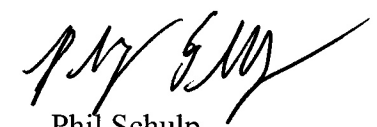
retain riders they should be fostered, not abandoned. To improve on-time performance, MARC must schedule realistically to meet the demonstrated needs of commuters, not simply eliminate stops. The changes MARC proposed are inconsistent with the MTA mission *"to encourage the use of public transportation; ... enhance the role of public transit; ... minimize the impact of transportation needs on the environment; and ... serve as a good neighbor."* Instead, the recommended changes will discourage ridership, lead to a loss of public transit use, put more cars on the road and increase traffic congestion in lower Montgomery County, where the benefits of mass transit are most needed. Eliminating service to Garrett Park at key times, in order to shave a couple of minutes from the commute time for commuters at farther-out stations, is at odds with the goals of mass transit in the mixed use, high density area where we live. Taxpayer dollars help provide this service and the State has an obligation to get the maximum use out of those tax dollars by enhancing service (and thus revenue to MARC) for Maryland commuters.

We look forward to seeing the revised schedule that MARC has promised. We expect that it will reflect the concerns expressed here, and by countless MARC riders in recent meetings, about curtailed service. Eliminating stops in Garrett Park is unwarranted; it represents poor public service and reflects deficient public policy.

We know and respect your desire to serve our community; we hope that you will support our advocacy of full service to Garrett Park. Thank you for your attention.



Jack Mandel



Phil Schulp

Councilmembers, Garrett Park Town Council

cc: Senator Jennie Forehand
Delegates Kumar Barve, Jim Gilchrist
and Luiz Simmons